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THE ELEPHANT FOUNDATION

Junior Newsletter



Positive Impacts from Pangolins?

Welcome to Vol. 9 of our weekly edition of junior newsletter.

In this series, we have been discussing the impacts of pangolins in the world around us. All 8 species of pangolins are protected by the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Learning objectives:

- Impacts of Pangolin on biodiversity
- Interesting facts and figures
- Recent pangolin conservation news

Positive Impact of Pangolins

Commonly referred to as guardians of the forest



Because they guard forests against termite eradication and preserve a healthy ecosystem pangolins are referred to as the forest's guardians. The only scaly mammals in the world are pangolins which, despite their diminutive size, can eat more than 0.66 pounds of termites in a single meal. Adult pangolins weigh 6.6 pounds.

One pangolin can prevent termites from destroying an area the size of 31 football fields (41 acres) thanks to their huge appetite. About 20% of the bulk of a pangolin is made up of its scales. Their "weapon and defense" is these firm scales when predators are near.

Different school of thought (bonus information)

Recent research has suggested that termites protect tropical rainforests during drought. Louise Ashton, a researcher at the University of Hong Kong and the research team designed a large-scale ecosystem manipulation experiment deep in the old-growth tropical rainforest of Malaysian Borneo, which occurred during and after the 2015 "super El Niño" climate event.

Ashton and the team discovered an increase in both the activity and abundance of termite activity in plots where communities were present during drought, nearly doubling when compared to that of post-drought conditions in the same plots. The termite surge resulted in overall increases in litter decomposition rates, soil nutrient mixing and increases in soil moisture. Furthermore, the researchers found that seedling survivability was higher in these areas, likely due to the preservation of soil moisture dry periods.

Therefore, it is suggested that termites, through tunneling below and consuming the dead and decaying leaves and wood scattered across the rainforest floor, termite communities mix, maintain and regulate soil properties like nutrients and moisture — each of which is a key factor in maintaining rainforest ecosystems.

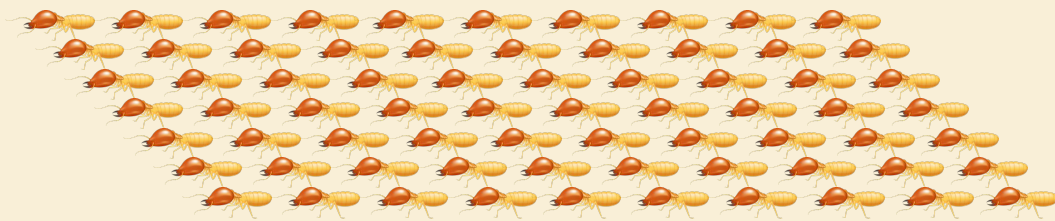
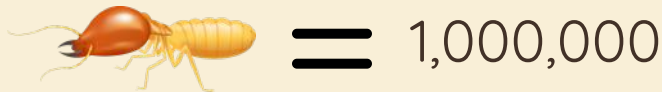
News source:

1. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/termites-protect-rainforests-climate-drought>
2. <https://www.yalescientific.org/2019/04/pests-or-engineers/>

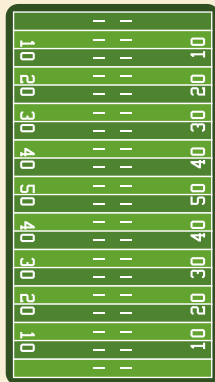
Fun Facts

Pangolins can eat more than 0.66 pounds of termites in a single meal.

Over 70 million a year!



Huge appetite of pangolins defends an area of the forest up to 41 acres of land. Equaling up to 31 football fields.



× 31

Pangolin's tongue length is up to 28 inches, attached to the pelvis and last pair of ribs.



News source:

1. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/facts/pangolins>

2. <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/facts/pangolin#:~:text=Up%20to%2028%20inches%2C%20a,its%20body%2C%20minus%20the%20tail>

Recent Pangolin Conservation News



Picture Source: France 24



Blood parasite found in pangolin, doctors investigating.

Lumbi (pangolin) is being treated for a blood parasite after he was rescued from traffickers during a police sting in South Africa's northern Limpopo province late last year. He and several other pangolins in the room are patients of Johannesburg Wildlife Veterinary Hospital, founded in 2016 to treat and rehabilitate indigenous wildlife. They were confiscated from poachers in South Africa and neighbouring countries, including Namibia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Many pangolins are in a horrendous state when they are rescued and need of medical care, after being kept in sacks and car boots for weeks with no food or water. "It's like an ICU (intensive care unit) for pangolins," said Nicci Wright, the wildlife rehabilitation specialist attending to Lumbi. The pangolins are kept at a secret site during treatment, which takes anything from weeks to months, before they can be released back into the wild. Although pangolins have existed for around 80 million years, medically little is known about them.

The ward that now cares for Lumbi was also home, until recently, to a pangolin named Steve. Last month, Steve was released back into the wild, where he belongs, after making a full recovery. Gareth Thomas is a volunteer pangolin walker who walked Steve weekly during the seven months of preparation for his release.

"I've been with him since day one. I was there when he got pulled out of the box from the poachers," he said during one of their final walks before the release. After a six-hour drive, Steve was set free into the vast 23,000-hectare Manyoni Game Reserve in southern KwaZulu-Natal province. Pangolin monitor Donald Davies from Zululand Conservation Trust offloaded a specially designed crate from the van, with Steve inside and opened it. With two telemetry devices attached to his scales, the pangolin cautiously stepped out, sniffing around and casually walking away to find ants for an afternoon grub.

News Source:

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220413-endangered-pangolins-get-fresh-chance-in-s-african-clinic>

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<https://www.theelephantsociety.org/elephant-adoption>

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THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE ELEPHANT FOUNDATION

To help us continue our work TEF has launched 'Friends of The Elephant Foundation' to engage more with wildlife animal lovers in Hong Kong. Through a monthly donation, you will become a Friend of the Foundation and will enjoy benefits such as Ranger Insurance, Elephant Adoption, Weekly and Quarterly newsletter, the ability to work with us in our campaigns to raise awareness, take part in various activities and seminars and at the same time support our partnered charity on the ground in Kenya.

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